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New ABC redundancies the direct result of latest budget cuts

The axing of the Fact Check unit and other editorial redundancies at the ABC are the inevitable result of funding cuts in this month's federal Budget, says the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance.

The announcement by ABC management this afternoon of 14 positions to be cut from the Perth, Brisbane, Sydney, and Melbourne newsrooms has been made more painful by yet another deplorable use of targeted redundancies.

Talented journalists, from the Fact Check Unit and National Reporting Team now have been given their marching orders, with little notice their position was in the firing line, and no chance to explore swap-outs or redeployment options before their positions were eliminated.

The loss of quality journalism and talented colleagues will impact newsrooms around the country, from Brisbane to Sydney, and Melbourne to Perth.

The cuts are the result of the ABC's enhanced newsgathering budget being cut by \$18.6 million over the next three years.

"As we had warned, these cuts – on top of the more than \$250 million which was cut in 2014 and 2015 – will place news services at the ABC under extreme pressure," said MEAA CEO Paul Murphy.

"The timing for this decision could not be worse: in the lead up to the federal election, when strong journalism to independently scrutinise politicians' claims and counter-claims is needed.

"It is disturbing that even after these cuts, the Director of ABC News, Gaven Morris, has warned of more challenges to continue delivering original and investigative journalism and local and regional newsgathering."

While MEAA acknowledges that externally imposed budget cuts are behind the job losses, a fairer process could – and should – have been extended to the area's facing cuts.

A voluntary round would have allowed affected staff to make personal choices around exiting the organisation, as is practised by organisations such as News Corp and Fairfax.

In current enterprise agreement negotiations with the ABC, MEAA and the Community and Public Sector Union are seeking the removal of a "skills matrix" process used for targeting people for redundancy.

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